

Public Hearing Testimony Speaker:

NON-speaking

Tracey Lay

Date:

3/12/07

Bill Number:

7348



**Testimony in Support of H.B. No. 7348 (Raised)  
An Act Concerning After School Programs  
Education Committee Public Hearing, March 12, 2007  
Submitted by Tracey Lay, Director, School Age Programs & Development Services  
EDUCATION CONNECTION**

March 12, 2007,

Senator Gaffey, Representative Fleishmann, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Tracey Lay. On behalf of EDUCATION CONNECTION and the 5 other RESC's (Regional Educational Service Centers) I am here to testify in support of raised bill 7348. I urge your support for increased funding for after school.

I am the Director of School Age Programs and Development Services for EDUCATION CONNECTION, which is one of the 6 Regional Education Service Centers for Connecticut. I am responsible for before & after school programs in 7 school districts that operate throughout western Connecticut in the elementary and middle schools. Our program staff also provides enrichment services, professional development opportunities and consulting services to other agencies and school districts. (See attached)

I am also currently the Chair of the Connecticut After School Network Board of Governors. The network is a statewide alliance representing parents and providers across the state. The Network's goal is to have high quality, affordable after school programs available to every Connecticut child and youth so that they grow up safe, healthy, educated, connected and employable. The Connecticut After School Network provides educational opportunities and support to over 1200 members, who are after school providers throughout Connecticut.

Most importantly I am the parent of 2 school age children and know how important quality after school programs can be to working families. Knowing our children are safe and well cared for in the after school hours is imperative for families, including mine. Studies show that work productivity is affected by this very issue. Productivity goes down after 3 p.m. when students are arriving home from school and parents are wondering where their children are and if they are okay. Investing in after school programs can help build productivity in the work place.

Representing EDUCATION CONNECTION and the Connecticut After School Network for the past 12 years, I have been actively working with other partners in the field of Out of School Time. I have been involved in the Connecticut After School Alliance (facilitated by the CT Commission on Children) since its inception at the Disney Institute in July, 2000. This was an invitational summit provided by the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, the U.S. Department of Education, and the National After School Alliance to teams from seven States.

Since then dedicated people from across the State-representing all kinds of after school programs; including Academic, the Arts, Child Care, Enrichment, Recreational, and others- have been brought together all with a common goal to enhance after school programs throughout Connecticut. Since that time the After School Advisory Council has been formed through the State Department of Education in partnership with the State Department of Social Services and the Commission on Children and other state agencies and stakeholders, to work as the advisory group to the Connecticut After School Network.

Connecticut continues to move forward as a visionary to other states in the field of After School, but we need your support to keep the momentum going. A lot has been accomplished, but there is much to do. Many communities in Connecticut, both urban and rural, are in dire need for quality after school programs.

In my various professional roles and as a parent I have personally experienced the positive outcomes after school programs can have on children and youth. I have seen firsthand, what the research shows; how after school programs can enhance the overall well-being of our children (emotionally, socially, physically, and academically). In addition to student success; there are numerous other benefits to investing in after school programs. Quality after school programs support working families, keep kids safe, and provide extra time for learning. They provide support to schools, communities and especially to our families in Connecticut.

On behalf of EDUCATION CONNECTION and the RESC's I wholeheartedly support these efforts and appreciate your continued support of quality after school programs for the children and youth in Connecticut.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of this much needed program.

Respectfully submitted by,

*Tracey Lay*

Tracey Lay  
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&  
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